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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 26 February to 24 June 2016

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my previous report of 26 February 2016 (S/2016/189).

2. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and along the Blue Line was generally calm, after the incidents that had occurred during the previous reporting period. The situation has remained relatively stable, despite provocative rhetoric that presents a risk to stability across the Blue Line. In their engagement with the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UNIFIL, the Lebanese and Israeli authorities continued to affirm their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and displayed resolve to safeguard the cessation of hostilities. By closely engaging with UNIFIL through the established liaison and coordination mechanism, the parties defused localized friction and continued to pursue practical localized arrangements along the Blue Line. Progress remained limited, however, on their outstanding obligations under the resolution and there was no progress towards a permanent ceasefire. Nearly 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), the current calm in southern Lebanon should not be confused with progress on its key objectives. This will require continued international attention, as well as proactive efforts by both parties.

3. I emphasized those key points during my visit to Lebanon with the Presidents of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, on 24 and 25 March. During the visit, we met with the Lebanese leadership, youth, women, and Syrian and Palestine refugees. We visited Tripoli and the Biqa', as well as UNIFIL. The joint visit underscored our commitment to peace and security, domestic stability and socioeconomic stabilization in the whole of Lebanon. It acknowledged the great debt owed to the Lebanese people for their generosity in hosting refugees until they return to their home country. Our consultations and visits of vulnerable families highlighted the continued need for humanitarian and development assistance to underserved Lebanese host communities and to Syrian and Palestine refugees, and for strong international support for Lebanon's State institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces.

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4. While the situation in the country was generally calm, the security situation remained fragile and vulnerable, in particular to terrorist attacks. On 12 June, a car bomb was detonated in front of a domestic financial institution in central Beirut. There has been no immediate claim of responsibility. The incident occurred in the context of domestic debate over recent measures of compliance implemented by Lebanese banks. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the security forces continued to prevent any re-occurrence of the major terrorist attack carried out by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the previous reporting period and arrested a number of suspects with links to ISIL and other militant groups. Nonetheless, the situation in the border areas remained unstable owing to the continued presence of militants, including of ISIL and the Nusrah Front.

5. On 15 April, the Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, reaffirmed before the Organization of Islamic Cooperation the commitment of Lebanon to its policy of disassociation, pursuant to the Baabda Declaration and the Government's ministerial statement, and consistent with his statement on behalf of the cabinet following its extraordinary session of 22 February. This followed the suspension of the support package from Saudi Arabia to the Lebanese Armed Forces and measures by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council against Hizbullah.

6. From 8 to 29 May, municipal elections were held as scheduled in four rounds across the country. These elections, the first since 2010, were carried out in a predominantly peaceful and positive atmosphere, without any major security incidents. Mr. Salam continued his efforts to lead the Government and the cabinet met during the reporting period and passed a limited number of decrees. On 14 June, the Kata'ib party announced the resignation of two of its ministers from Government in protest over the Cabinet's internal decision-making mechanism. This follows the resignation announced by the Minister of Justice, Ashraf Rifi, on 21 February, in protest over what he called Hizbullah's domination over the Cabinet. Despite the ongoing parliamentary dialogue sessions chaired by the Speaker, Nabih Berri, and continued dialogue between the Future Movement and Hizbullah, there was no progress on electing a president, a position which has now been vacant for more than two years. On 2 June, a fortieth parliamentary session to elect a president was inquorate owing to the ongoing boycott of the Free Patriotic Movement and Hizbullah. Civil society activists demanding better governance and an improved delivery of services continued to hold regular, limited protests during the reporting period.

7. The number of Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon remained stable during the reporting period, owing to the policy put in place by the Government in 2015 to restrict access to humanitarian cases. As at 20 May, 1,048,275 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR, including 47,138 in the UNIFIL area of operations.

8. Tensions and protests continued early in the reporting period in the Palestine refugee camps, over adjustments to the hospitalization policy of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). These were calmed by the initiation of talks to resolve the disagreements between the Palestinian factions and UNRWA. The ongoing dialogue led to an easing of blockages of and sit-ins in UNRWA installations. In the Ein El Hilweh camp, there were serious clashes between extremist militants and Fatah that led to a number of fatalities.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

9. UNIFIL completed and shared with both parties the reports of the investigation into the rocket firing that occurred on 20 December 2015 and the improvised explosive device attack that occurred on 4 January 2016. The UNIFIL investigation into the incident of 20 December confirmed that three rockets of 122 mm calibre had been fired by means of battery-activation from improvised ramps located in the vicinity of Hinniyah (Sector West). One rocket had landed in a plantation close to Nahariya in Israel, while a second had reportedly landed in the sea off the coast of Israel. The third impact site could not be located. The Israel Defense Forces retaliated with at least seven mortar rounds of 120 mm calibre, which fell in the vicinity of Zibqin (Sector West). No injuries were reported and no one claimed responsibility for the rocket launching. Based on information provided by the Israel Defense Forces on the attack of 4 January, UNIFIL concluded that three improvised explosive devices had been detonated in an area more than one kilometre south of the Blue Line, in the Shab'a Farms area, hitting two Israel Defense Forces vehicles, each driven by one soldier, who had reportedly been treated for shock. Hizbullah had claimed responsibility for the attack. In response, the Israel Defense Forces had fired a total of 122 artillery shells of 155 mm calibre, some containing high explosive and phosphorous, of which 82 landed north of the Blue Line in the areas of Arab al-Wazzani, Bastrah, Majidiyah and Mari (Sector East), without causing significant damage but posing a high risk for the local population and UNIFIL personnel.

10. On 15 March, east of United Nations position 9-63, near Udaysah (Sector East), the Israel Defense Forces removed pieces of concrete pipe from a track leading to the Israeli technical fence, south of the Blue Line. Subsequently, Lebanese municipal workers violated the Blue Line when creating a sand barrier in the same location. During the works, Israel Defense Forces soldiers located south of the technical fence pointed weapons at the Lebanese workers. UNIFIL monitored the situation throughout the incident to prevent an escalation. The following day, Lebanese civilians and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel returned to the area and violated the Blue Line. On 21 March, the Israel Defense Forces built a section of prefabricated wall in the area south of the Israeli technical fence. UNIFIL continues to liaise with the parties to ensure calm in that area of the Blue Line, where tensions have arisen in the past.

11. Other ground violations of the Blue Line were carried out mainly by shepherds and their flocks in the Shab'a Farms and Bastrah (Sector East) and by farmers cultivating their fields in Blida (Sector East) and Rumaysh (Sector West). Following previously observed and reported seasonal patterns and despite repeated warnings by UNIFIL personnel, violations by shepherds and farmers increased with the onset of spring. Furthermore, on six occasions in April, UNIFIL observed groups of 4 to 10 men in civilian clothes walking in areas close to the Blue Line in the vicinity of Hula and Mays al-Jabal (Sector East) and violating it briefly in each instance. The men carried cameras, and once UNIFIL observed a stone being thrown at the Israeli technical fence. At times, individuals approached the Blue Line using the lanes opened by UNIFIL through minefields leading to Blue Line markers. On several

occasions, Israel Defense Forces soldiers monitored the activity. UNIFIL urged the Lebanese Armed Forces to act to ensure respect of the Blue Line. On 2 June, one Israel Defense Forces soldier crossed briefly into territory north of the Blue Line. Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers in a nearby position fired five warning shots in the air and the Israel Defense Forces soldier returned south of the Blue Line. Later on the same day, eight Israel Defense Forces soldiers briefly crossed the Blue Line in the Bastrah area (Sector East).

12. UNIFIL continued to observe civilians carrying unauthorized weapons in the area of operations, albeit in significantly fewer instances than during the previous reporting period. Most incidents involved civilians carrying hunting weapons in the areas of Mays al-Jabal and Blida (Sector East) as well as Marun al-Ra's (Sector West). On one occasion, two armed hunters crossed south of the Blue Line, in the vicinity of Mays al-Jabal. There were also several instances where UNIFIL observed the presence or firing of small arms, including during weddings and funerals and on the evening of 22 May, following the conclusion of the municipal elections in southern Lebanon. In all cases, UNIFIL informed the Lebanese Armed Forces of the violations.

13. The Israel Defense Forces continued to assert that Hizbullah maintains military infrastructure and equipment in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL monitors the area of operations and the Blue Line and reports all violations of resolution 1701 (2006) that it observes, including the presence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons. In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL does not proactively search private property for weapons in the south, unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity from that location. Where specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel, weapons or infrastructure inside its area of operations, UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, remains determined to act with all means available within its mandate and capabilities. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces command continued to confirm that it would act immediately to put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions.

14. Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace continued almost daily, mostly with unmanned aerial vehicles, but also with fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty. UNIFIL protested to the Israel Defense Forces about overflights and called upon the Government of Israel to stop them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested against the air violations to UNIFIL.

15. Israel has continued to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. To date, Israel has not responded to the proposal submitted by UNIFIL to both parties in 2011 concerning security arrangements aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL in July 2011 of their agreement to the proposal.

16. UNIFIL generally continued to enjoy full freedom of movement throughout the area of operations. In a few isolated incidents in Sector West, UNIFIL troops encountered unfriendly behaviour and their movement was obstructed. On 7 April, a group of eight persons in civilian clothes stopped a UNIFIL patrol in the vicinity of

Sribbin and accused the peacekeepers of taking photographs. A handheld radio and a camera were taken from the patrol. UNIFIL protested to the Lebanese Armed Forces about the incident. To date, the items have not been returned. On 7 May, a UNIFIL patrol was stopped in the vicinity of Batuliyah and asked to leave the location. An alternate route was blocked with three cars, which were removed after the intervention of a civilian. Upon leaving the area, the patrol was stopped once more by a man in a vehicle carrying an assault rifle, who then followed the patrol for approximately one kilometre. UNIFIL engaged with the Lebanese Armed Forces and community leaders about each incident to prevent their reoccurrence.

17. The relations between UNIFIL and the local population remained largely positive. The UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander maintained close relations with local authorities, religious leaders and a wide range of community representatives. UNIFIL civilian and military personnel regularly engaged with municipal and civil society representatives on a variety of issues. UNIFIL undertook outreach initiatives aimed at capacity development and at raising awareness among the local population of its mandate and activities, including on International Women's Day, World Water Day and Mine Awareness Day.

18. UNIFIL continued to implement quick-impact projects to support the extension of State authority in the area of operations and address the needs of the local population. Projects focused on improving access to basic services, including water supply, health and education, as well as capacity-building to promote economic and social empowerment of the local communities. UNIFIL carried out joint trainings with civil defence and municipal police personnel, in support for government efforts, to enhance capacity. UNIFIL contingents provided medical, dental and veterinary assistance to the local population.

19. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained their level of deployment at two brigades in the area south of the Litani River. They constructed eight watchtowers along the Blue Line in Sector West and intermittent observation duty at the watchtowers has commenced. In the light of the tense security situation along the eastern border with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Armed Forces maintained a reinforced presence in the north-eastern part of the UNIFIL area of operations (Shab'a village and the Arkub area). For the municipal elections in southern Lebanon on 22 May, the Lebanese authorities significantly strengthened the deployment of security forces in the area of operations to ensure a safe and secure environment during and immediately after the voting. The elections were carried out without significant security incidents.

20. UNIFIL conducted an average of 13,650 operational activities monthly throughout the area of operations, including patrols, checkpoints and observation tasks. The number of operational activities carried out by UNIFIL in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces remained largely the same as in the previous period. UNIFIL took advantage of the generally calm situation in the area of operations to expand foot patrols in villages and urban areas, enhancing contact between peacekeepers and the local population.

21. In accordance with its mandate, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, which comprises four corvettes, one offshore patrol vessel and two fast patrol boats, carried out maritime interdiction activities and provided training for the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy. During the reporting period, the Maritime Task Force hailed 1,839 ships and the Lebanese authorities inspected 442 vessels. All the ships thus

inspected were declared clear. UNIFIL continued to carry out joint exercises and training with the Lebanese Armed Forces, including their Navy, to enhance capabilities and operational effectiveness.

22. The Maritime Task Force maintained a visible presence in the southern part of the area of maritime operations to prevent tensions between Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL does not have a mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which was installed unilaterally by Israel and which is not recognized by the Government of Lebanon or the United Nations. The Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out frequent maintenance activities at the buoys. On several occasions, Israel Defense Forces patrol boats positioned south of the line of buoys fired machine gun rounds and flares in a westerly direction.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

23. During the period under review, the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander maintained regular contact with Lebanese and Israeli authorities, focusing on the situation in the area of operations and operational and security issues related to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL worked closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces through the established liaison and coordination arrangements to defuse sources of tension and prevent incidents along the Blue Line and in the area of operations. In the tripartite forum and in bilateral meetings with UNIFIL, the parties consistently conveyed that they did not have offensive intentions and that they fully respected the integrity of the Blue Line.

24. Nevertheless, tension occasionally mounted in the vicinity of the Blue Line as a result of violations or actions by either side, which were interpreted as provocative by the other. UNIFIL engaged with the parties to de-escalate localized incidents as they arose and to assist in reducing the scope for friction. UNIFIL also encouraged the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to use more proactively the established liaison mechanism to share information on planned activities and deployments, in particular in sensitive areas along the Blue Line.

25. UNIFIL remained closely engaged with the parties to prevent tension from rising and offered its assistance to remove the sand barrier deposited by Lebanese municipal workers south of the Blue Line in the sensitive location near Udaysah (Sector East). UNIFIL also engaged with the parties, with a view to preventing incidents resulting from the presence of Lebanese men in civilian attire in the vicinity of the Blue Line, who at times violated the Blue Line and used the lanes opened by UNIFIL through minefields leading to Blue Line markers.

26. Capitalizing on the prevailing calm, UNIFIL continued to assist the parties in developing mutually agreeable security arrangements and confidence-building measures that would reinforce the cessation of hostilities and facilitate respect for the Blue Line. UNIFIL conducted bilateral consultations in Lebanon and Israel to seek to renew arrangements for the upcoming harvesting by Lebanese farmers of olive fields in Blida, which extend south of the Blue Line. UNIFIL increased its monitoring in the vicinity of the Wazzani River and maintained close coordination with the parties to prevent violations of the Blue Line in that area, particularly given the increased number of visitors to the area during the summer months.

27. During the reporting period, the parties worked with UNIFIL to avoid tension or misunderstandings when undertaking routine maintenance activities in sensitive areas close to the Blue Line, such as vegetation and mud clearance and maintenance of the Ghajar water pumps.

28. Palestinian Commemorations of Land Day on 30 March, Al-Nakba on 15 May and Al-Naksa on 5 June were conducted peacefully in the area of operations. UNIFIL liaised with both parties in advance to assist in preventing incidents on those occasions. In close coordination with UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces effectively exercised control of access and ensured that public gatherings near the Blue Line did not give rise to incidents.

29. Since my previous report, UNIFIL has continued to facilitate the tripartite forum, which addresses recurring violations of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including ground violations, Israeli air violations, the continued occupation of northern Ghajar, as well as allegations by the Israel Defense Forces of Hizbullah's presence and activities near the Blue Line. The parties also discussed the regional threats faced by both countries and their continued interest in maintaining calm and stability along the Blue Line. The meetings highlighted the importance of using the tripartite forum and other liaison and coordination channels with UNIFIL to prevent tactical issues from causing unintended escalation and to clarify the parties' respective positions and concerns.

30. There continues to be no progress towards the establishment of a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv.

31. UNIFIL continued its efforts with the parties to mark the Blue Line visibly on the ground, as a confidence-building measure, as well as to assist with the monitoring of violations and prevent inadvertent crossings. The parties conducted separate field visits with UNIFIL to measure new points and validate markers constructed by UNIFIL. The marking process is supported by UNIFIL demining teams that clear access lanes through minefields. During the period, UNIFIL constructed 12 additional markers, bringing the total to date to 249 Blue Line markers, of which 237 have been verified by the parties, thereby confirming acceptance of their placement on the ground. UNIFIL, in close coordination with the parties, also continued to refurbish markers to ensure that they are intact and can fulfil their function.

32. UNIFIL continued to support the Lebanese Armed Forces through the implementation of the strategic dialogue plan and the promotion of military assistance by international donors to the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. During the reporting period, UNIFIL convened a meeting on the strategic dialogue with diplomatic representatives in Lebanon to facilitate resource mobilization, with a view to covering Lebanese Armed Forces capability gaps for tasks mandated under resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL facilitated donations from its troop-contributing countries, aimed at improving the accommodation and training facilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the area of operations, including a solar lighting system and power generators.

C. Disarming armed groups

33. Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah again confirmed Hizbullah's possession of rockets capable of striking any location in Israel in an interview

televised on 21 March. Nasrallah reiterated threats made during the previous reporting period that the cost of an Israeli attack on Lebanon would be substantially higher on Israel than on Lebanon and concluded that Hizbullah's arms therefore constituted a deterrent to potential aggression. On 20 April, the Israel Defense Forces Deputy Chief of Staff was reported to warn publicly that Israel's response to a strike by Hizbullah would lead to a full-scale war, creating large damage to the Lebanese infrastructure, to Lebanese houses and other civilian facilities. On 15 June, the Chief of the Israel Defense Forces Military Intelligence Directorate was reported to state that Israel did not have offensive intentions for war but was more than ever ready for one. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the Lebanese State continued to restrict the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory.

34. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security services made a number of arrests of Lebanese and Syrian terrorist suspects allegedly affiliated with ISIL and other violent extremist groups. Lebanese security forces also arrested a member of a ring recruiting minors to carry out attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces and other targets. In a video released on 12 March, members of ISIL threatened Lebanese officials and Hizbullah and urged the Sunni community to revolt. On 11 May, military prosecutors charged 11 individuals with membership of ISIL, seven of whom were already in custody.

35. During the reporting period, there was no progress in the dismantling of the military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada. The existence of the bases continues to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor and control effectively parts of the border.

36. The situation in the Palestinian refugee camps was generally quiet during the reporting period, with the exception of the Ein El Hilweh camp. On 28 March, a figure from the Fatah movement was shot dead by an Islamist militant, triggering a further round of violence in the camp. Later that day, the brother of the Islamist militant was killed by gunmen in an apparent revenge killing. On 1 April, one person was killed and several were wounded as further clashes broke out between armed groups in the camp. A senior Fatah official, Fathi Zeidan, was subsequently killed in an improvised explosive device attack on his vehicle, which injured four others, in Sayda, adjacent to the entrance of the Ein El Hilweh camp, on 12 April.

D. Arms embargo and border control

37. Representatives of the Government of Israel have consistently asserted that there are significant ongoing arms transfers to Hizbullah across the Lebanese-Syrian border, and that Hizbullah has now amassed an arsenal of more than 100,000 missiles and rockets, much of which Israel claims is located in civilian residential areas, such as in the letter dated 17 February 2016 addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/153). The United Nations takes these reports seriously, particularly given the statements by the Secretary-General of Hizbullah regarding the existence and capabilities of Hizbullah's strategic rocket arsenal, but is not in a position to verify them independently.

38. Hizbullah remained engaged in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Funerals for Hizbullah commanders and fighters killed in the Syrian Arab Republic

continued to be held in Lebanon throughout the reporting period. Other Lebanese individuals are also reported to have joined armed groups fighting in the Syrian conflict. On 13 May, Hizbullah announced the death of Mustapha Badreddine, the Hizbullah commander of military operations in the Syrian Arab Republic.

39. The situation along the Lebanese-Syrian border remained tense during the reporting period. Efforts to support the deployment of land border regiments at critical points along the border were ongoing. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained a vigilant presence around the town of Arsal and the neighbouring areas to prevent infiltration attempts by armed extremist groups, including ISIL and the Nusrah Front. On 10 March, the Lebanese Armed Forces launched a successful operation to seize territory held by ISIL on the outskirts of the border village of R'as Ba'albak. The Lebanese Armed Forces reported that one of their soldiers and five members of ISIL had been killed in the course of the operation. On 24 March, a bomb targeting a Lebanese Armed Forces vehicle exploded in the area of Arsal, killing one soldier and injuring three others.

40. There was a decrease in the number of recorded incidents of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon, including nine incidents of shooting, nine incidents of shelling and one airstrike by a Syrian government aircraft on Lebanese territory. One fatality and nine casualties were reported as a result of those incidents.

41. There were continued reports of the cross-border movement of fighters and arms trafficking during the reporting period. On 28 February, Greek authorities stopped a boat destined for Lebanon illegally carrying firearms and explosives. Within Lebanon, security authorities arrested suspects for arms trafficking in four separate operations in Biqa' during the reporting period.

42. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to improve their capabilities pursuant to the capabilities development plan, despite the suspension of planned support from Saudi Arabia. On 25 March, I met with the Lebanese Armed Forces Command and representatives of the International Support Group for Lebanon at the Lebanese Armed Forces Headquarters, in Beirut. International partners continued to support the Lebanese Armed Forces on a bilateral basis to enhance their capability to secure the borders of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic and counter terrorist threats. The Executive Military Commission, bringing together the Lebanese Armed Forces and donors and co-chaired by the United Nations, met on 10 June to assess progress on support for the updated capabilities development plan, including the strategic dialogue. Ongoing commitments of support for the Lebanese Armed Forces were expressed, and three additional Member States formally joined the Executive Military Commission.

43. The continued implementation of the security plan for Tripoli contributed to a general calm in that area. The implementation of the security plan in Biqa' was ongoing, but a number of incidents occurred during the reporting period. In Brital, Ba'albak and Hirmil, illegally held firearms were used by criminals against the security forces in personal disputes and in a domestic violence incident. Illegally held firearms were also used in incidents in Laylakah and Burj al-Barajinah in south Beirut, which caused a number of injuries. During the reporting period, shots fired in the air during celebratory or commemorative events using illegally held firearms were responsible for four deaths, including two children, and critically injuring three other children.

44. More than $671 million in international grants are available to Lebanon against the priorities outlined by the Government during the London Conference on Syria held in February. These funds include funding for 2016 under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. An additional $1 billion in grants is expected to be available to be disbursed in the course of 2016. In addition, Lebanon will be able to benefit from approximately $800 million in concessional financing that is expected for Lebanon and Jordan through the Concessional Financing Facility jointly developed by the United Nations, the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank.

45. As follow-up to the London Conference on Syria, the Government and international partners have developed a joint tracking mechanism to follow up on the statement of intent of Lebanon. This mechanism foresees the establishment of a high-level steering group, chaired by Mr. Salam and comprised of government and international partners, as the main platform for policy dialogue and monitoring of commitments made at and outcomes of the London Conference on Syria. Pending the establishment of this mechanism, the Government has held internal discussions on its commitment to review and reconsider current regulations governing access of Syrian refugees to the labour market. The Government has repeatedly stated that such access would be of a temporary nature and only applicable to agreed sectors, namely agriculture, construction and the environment.

46. During the first quarter of 2016, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the United Nations Children's Fund and other key stakeholders jointly began the development of phase II (2017-2021) of the plan entitled "Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon", in response to the protracted educational needs resulting from the Syrian conflict. For the 2015/2016 school year, national and international partners are supporting the enrolment and retention of a total of 197,000 Lebanese and 150,000 non-Lebanese children in all public schools. All public schools have opened their doors to non-Lebanese children.

47. The number of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic remained stable at approximately 40,000 individuals recorded with UNRWA in Lebanon, a slight decrease in the total number since the previous reporting period owing to the return of some refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic and to others reportedly leaving the country to try to reach Europe. Those Palestine refugees continued to face restrictions on renewing their legal status in Lebanon, which caused further humanitarian challenges. In March, UNRWA renewed the monthly cash assistance for housing, which is currently funded until October 2016. Further to this, UNRWA successfully transitioned from in-kind food donations to the provision of cash assistance, which provided for greater flexibility and addressed the risk of in-kind donations ending up on the informal market.

48. Together with its partners, the United Nations organized dedicated activities to strengthen the role of women in the democratic process and to raise awareness about gender issues. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon led the United Nations system in a series of eight events held across Lebanon, in collaboration with international and national partners, to support efforts by Lebanese women to engage in political life and be represented politically, including training for women candidates. The municipal elections saw only a slight increase in the number of women candidates, from 5.6 to 6.4 per cent, and the number of elected women rose from 4.6 to 5.2 per cent in comparison with 2010. The Office continued its efforts to strengthen women's participation and representation in preparation for the parliamentary elections.

49. The complex challenges currently affecting Lebanon underscore the importance of a robust multidimensional engagement by the United Nations system. The United Nations strategic framework for Lebanon (2017-2020), which is being finalized, integrates United Nations efforts towards peace and security objectives with support for governance, socioeconomic development and humanitarian efforts. The framework is intended to guide a system-wide integrated response, articulated on the basis of the "whole-of-Lebanon" approach, to help to address threats to stability, to prevent conflict and to improve socioeconomic prospects.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

50. Five manual mine clearance teams, one explosive ordnance disposal team and one mechanical mine clearance team continued to be validated and deployed in the UNIFIL area of operations. UNIFIL refurbished 136 m^2 of land to provide access to Blue Line points during the reporting period. The Mine Action Service conducted 20 safety monitoring visits to refurbishment sites of the UNIFIL Military Engineering Unit, as well as 11 briefings and training sessions on weapons awareness. The Mine Action Service also contributed education materials on mine risk awareness to the Lebanon Mine Action Centre.

F. Delineation of borders

51. No progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border during the reporting period, including in areas where it is uncertain or disputed, in spite of the call to that end made in Security Council resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). Extending the authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout all Lebanese territory and enabling the Lebanese security authorities to secure the borders to prevent the entry of arms or related materiel necessitate the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic as soon as practicable.

52. There was likewise no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms. There has still been no reaction from either Israel or the Syrian Arab Republic to the provisional definition of that area contained in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641).

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

53. UNIFIL continuously reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures, including in the light of specific security threat warnings received, and closely coordinated them with the Lebanese authorities. In the Arqoub area (Sector East), strict security measures requiring armed security escort for official movements by all United Nations personnel remained in place. In the area of operations, commemorative shooting during events and gatherings, including funerals, posed a risk to UNIFIL personnel as well as the local population. During times of heightened tension in the Ein El Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp, UNIFIL adjusted its movements between the area of operations and Beirut in accordance with the prevailing security situation and advisories.

54. UNIFIL continued to monitor proceedings at the Lebanese Military Court against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL. The next hearing related to a serious attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent in 2007 is scheduled for 1 July. In the case of a serious attack perpetrated in 2008, in which one of the four previously sentenced perpetrators filed an appeal, a hearing at the Military Court of Appeal was held on 10 March, and the next hearing is scheduled for 20 September. In three cases of serious attacks perpetrated in 2011, the investigations are ongoing. In a case of terror intent opened in January 2014, a hearing at the Permanent Military Court was held on 13 June. The Court scheduled the next hearing for 7 December.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

55. As at 7 June, UNIFIL comprised 10,548 military personnel, including 384 women, from 40 troop-contributing countries, as well as 242 international and 578 national civilian staff, including 72 and 133 women, respectively. In addition, 54 military observers, including two women, of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) were part of UNIFIL.

V. Conduct and discipline

56. UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon continued to strengthen the existing preventative measures against sexual exploitation and abuse that had been put in place following a sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessment for Lebanon. Under the stewardship of the Deputy Special Coordinator, the United Nations country team on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network has developed a standard operating procedure intended to standardize the response to the risk of such abuse and continuously assesses risk, in collaboration with local and international non-governmental organizations and local authorities. In this way, risk mitigation and preventive activities emphasize accountability and a victim-centred approach within the zero tolerance policy. In addition, a community-based complaints mechanism for Lebanon is under development on a pilot basis. Within UNIFIL, sexual exploitation and abuse focal points have been appointed and a Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Standing Task Force and a Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Immediate Response Team has been established to serve both missions, in line with the provisions of the reports of the Secretary-General A/69/779 and A/70/729.

VI. Observations

57. I am encouraged by the calm that prevailed in the UNIFIL area of operations and across the Blue Line during the reporting period, in large part the result of the strong commitment and efforts by both Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL, in close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has established a strategic environment in southern Lebanon following the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006) that has proven its strength and viability over the years in a vastly changed regional

environment. The good offices provided by my Special Coordinator have been equally critical in that regard.

58. I welcome the continued commitment of the parties to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The violent and unstable regional context makes it ever more important for the parties to make tangible progress towards a permanent ceasefire, as envisaged in the resolution. In order to prevent future conflict, it is imperative that the parties seize this moment, 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), to revisit areas of potential progress. I call upon the parties to work constructively with my Special Coordinator and the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander to explore concrete solutions in pursuit of that goal. My Special Coordinator will continue to engage in preventive diplomacy with all those concerned and provide good offices to facilitate progress in this regard.

59. I welcome the continued reliance by the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces on the UNIFIL liaison and coordination arrangements as a key element in preventing and defusing tensions along the Blue Line. I am also encouraged by the ongoing cooperation of the parties with UNIFIL on the visible marking of the Blue Line and call upon both sides to renew their efforts to find points of agreement in relation to those stretches of the Blue Line where they deem marking to be contentious. Full respect for the Blue Line is a critical factor in maintaining calm and stability in the area and any deliberate violation of the Blue Line is unacceptable.

60. The absence of progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area, in spite of the call made in resolution 1701 (2006), remains a source of concern. I reiterate my call upon the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided in my report of 30 October 2007. I will continue to engage with the parties to that end.

61. The Israel Defense Forces continue to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). I once more remind Israel of its obligation to withdraw its armed forces from the area, in accordance with the resolution. I urge the Israeli authorities to take steps to that end and encourage them to make further use of the UNIFIL presence and liaison and coordination arrangements to facilitate a smooth and secure withdrawal from the area.

62. It remains of serious concern that Israel continued to violate Lebanese airspace on an almost daily basis, in complete disregard of the sovereignty of Lebanon and the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). I once again call upon the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory and territorial waters.

63. I remain concerned about the continuing presence of unauthorized weapons in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006). The presence or firing of small arms in the area of operations, including during commemorative events, is not only in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) but also poses a risk to the population and UNIFIL personnel. I call upon the Government of Lebanon, which holds the primary responsibility, to take all actions necessary to ensure that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations.

64. It is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, as the host Government, to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel. I welcome the overall

positive relationship between UNIFIL and the local population and the Mission's continued efforts to cultivate this relationship.

65. I condemn the car bomb attack of 12 June that targeted for the first time a financial institution in the banking sector of Lebanon, a sector that remains central to the country's stability and under the authority of the Central Bank Governor. I call upon the State authorities to continue to intensify their efforts to maintain security throughout the whole of Lebanon.

66. The long-term guarantee of peace between Lebanon and Israel requires proactive steps by both parties to resolve all outstanding issues. Rhetoric by either side threatening the use of force exacerbates tensions and escalates the probability of miscalculation that could lead to conflict. The possession of arms or threats of violence by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the State poses a serious threat to the fragile calm along the Blue Line. Hizbullah's claim that its sophisticated arsenal constitutes deterrence to potential Israeli aggression undermines resolution 1701 (2006). It is vital that, once a president is elected, the national dialogue reconvene to address outstanding elements of the resolution and the issue of the national defence strategy. It remains important that earlier decisions of the national dialogue are also implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

67. I reiterate the importance of close collaboration between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Further enhancing the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces for tasks mandated under the resolution in the UNIFIL area of operations on land and at sea is a strategic priority. Consistent with my messages to the International Support Group for Lebanon during my recent visit to Lebanon, I encourage Member States to increase assistance in the framework of the capabilities development plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the strategic dialogue. I commend the Lebanese Armed Forces for their impartial role in addressing the many security challenges that Lebanon faces and I regret the loss of life of Lebanese soldiers in security operations. The unity and independence demonstrated by the Lebanese Armed Forces show that they deserve the confidence and support of the international community. I therefore welcome the ongoing bilateral support of other Member States for the Lebanese Armed Forces. The domestic security of Lebanon and the defence of its borders are the responsibility of the Lebanese Armed Forces, and it is essential that international partners continue to provide equipment and training, including for border protection and counter-terrorism, and to further develop its civil-military cooperation and human rights components.

68. All Lebanese parties must work together to preserve the political independence and sovereignty of Lebanon and shield it from the impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. I therefore condemn the participation of Lebanese citizens in the Syrian conflict in breach of the policy of disassociation adopted by the Government of Lebanon and of the principles of the Baabda Declaration of June 2012, which was agreed by all Lebanese political parties, and the importance of which has been reaffirmed by the Security Council. I call upon all Lebanese parties to cease any involvement in the Syrian conflict, consistent with their commitment in the Baabda Declaration, and to recommit to the Government's policy of disassociation.

69. I condemn the movement of fighters and war materiel across the Lebanese-Syrian border in breach of resolution 1701 (2006) and shelling, shooting and aerial incursions into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate that the lack of a delineated, demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border is no justification for violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and groups fighting in Qalamun to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

70. I continue to be concerned by the risk of radicalization among the Lebanese population as a result of regional and domestic dynamics. Lebanon must be safeguarded against this. I urge all national and international stakeholders to work with the United Nations in the coming months to formulate a comprehensive approach to prevent violent extremism in Lebanon in order to protect the country's unique multi-confessional nature.

71. The dangerous potential impact of radicalization is magnified considerably by the proliferation of arms outside the control of the Lebanese State. Illegally held firearms pose a serious threat to the security of the citizens of Lebanon and undermine the rule of law. I call upon Member States to uphold their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) to prevent the sale or supply of unauthorized arms or related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon. I also call upon the Lebanese authorities to enforce the relevant regulations that prohibit the practice of unauthorized gunfire.

72. I commend Mr. Salam's continued leadership and efforts to enable the Government to function effectively. The announcements of cabinet resignations at a time when Lebanon faces growing challenges demand unity in Government. Such steps contribute to the continuing erosion of the political institutions of the Lebanese State. I am deeply concerned about the inability of the Government to take decisions in the interest of the country and call upon the political leadership in Lebanon to stand together in the national interest despite their political differences. Party leaders need to work with Mr. Salam to ensure that the Government may effectively respond to the people's needs. Recalling the Security Council press statement of 24 May (SC/12371), I reiterate my deep concern over the two-year vacancy in the presidency, which has led to blockages in the Council of Ministers and rendered the parliament incapable of passing legislation. The resulting political paralysis seriously impairs the ability of Lebanon to address the political, social, economic, humanitarian and security challenges facing the country and risks undermining the confidence of Lebanese citizens and the international community in the country's stability. All parties have a responsibility to facilitate the functioning of State institutions and the delivery of public services. As consistently called for by the Security Council, I urge all political leaders to exercise flexibility in order to reach consensus to elect a president and end the political and institutional crisis in Lebanon. This is urgent. The leaders of Lebanon have a responsibility towards their country and are directly accountable to their constituents and to future generations for their actions. In this regard, I call upon those who have boycotted parliamentary sessions to fulfil their constitutional duty to participate in the election of a president without delay.

73. I commend the Government of Lebanon for the timely and orderly conduct of the municipal elections. This has demonstrated the Government's capacity and the people's desire to uphold the democratic process. I urge the Lebanese authorities to

move ahead within the calender for the next legislative elections, in accordance with the Constitution. I encourage strengthened women's participation and effective representation in the elections with the highest turnout possible. The election of a president, a functioning and united Government and timely parliamentary elections are critical for the stability of Lebanon and its capacity to withstand regional challenges.

74. The proceedings of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon continue to reflect the international community's commitment to combat impunity. I note the sentencing of Michel Samahah and encourage the Lebanese judicial and security authorities to continue their efforts to combat impunity.

75. I thank the Member States participating in the International Support Group for Lebanon and welcome the continued country-level engagement of the Group in Beirut, led by my Special Coordinator. The Group has met to coordinate efforts and messaging on the peace and security, stabilization, and humanitarian and development issues that Lebanon faces. My Special Coordinator for Lebanon will continue in the context of her good offices role to conduct intensified contacts with the partners of Lebanon and engage with key stakeholders with the aim of helping Lebanon towards a solution to the presidential vacancy. I urge the Group to continue its work in coordination with the Special Coordinator to seek opportunities to help to address rising challenges to the stability and security of Lebanon. Regional partners, including Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, also have an interest in preventing the spillover of regional crises into Lebanon. The international community needs to support collectively the political and economic stability of Lebanon, including through the continued provision of assistance.

76. I welcome the generous and significant levels of international assistance that have been pledged for Lebanon since the London Conference on Syria in February. I note the progress achieved in the establishment of a mechanism to support the implementation of the statement of intent of Lebanon and call upon the Government of Lebanon and international partners to maintain momentum in the implementation of the commitments made during the London Conference to ensure a sustainable and adequate response to the protracted impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanese communities and institutions. I further commend the partnership between the World Bank, the United Nations and the Islamic Development Bank in the development of the Concessional Financing Facility for Lebanon, which I urge Member States to support.

77. As I stated publicly during my visit to Lebanon, the position of the United Nations is that Syrian refugees should return to the Syrian Arab Republic when conditions are conducive, or that they should be resettled in a third country. I reiterate that the preferred solution is their return to their country, when conditions allow, at which time the United Nations will spare no effort to mobilize support for returnees. In the meantime, I urge the Government to continue to review, in line with its commitments made at the London Conference, the current regulatory framework governing access of Syrian refugees to the labour market, and welcome the various initiatives currently being developed under its aegis to create temporary employment opportunities for Syrian refugees pending their eventual return, and durable employment opportunities for vulnerable Lebanese, in particular the 30 per cent of Lebanese citizens who live below the poverty line.

78. I welcome the continued commitment of the Palestinian leadership to disassociate the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from the violence in the region. The need to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive and just peace settlement, is ever more urgent. The recent protests indicate the increased reliance of the Palestine refugees on UNRWA services and show that a more sustainably funded UNRWA leads to more stability in Lebanon and the region. I encourage donors to be forthcoming in their support for UNRWA to avert a similar funding crisis in 2016 and enable the Agency to carry out its mandate to assist Palestine refugees effectively.

79. I am pleased to note the renewed effort by Mr. Salam to make progress on resolving the issue of the delineation of the exclusive economic zones between Lebanon and Israel, as expressed in a letter he addressed to me on 24 March. Establishing a mutually profitable way to exploit offshore oil and gas resources would constitute an important confidence-building measure between Lebanon and Israel. As stated in my response to Mr. Salam, I intend to intensify my good offices through my Special Coordinator to explore with all parties concerned the conditions for moving forward on this issue and how the United Nations can best support such efforts.

80. The stability of Lebanon is a "regional public good". Almost 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), relative calm prevails along the Blue Line. This is a positive development. But relative calm should not be mistaken for durable stability. Many of the root causes of the conflict are largely unaddressed. The long-term preventive potential of the resolution requires us, actively and collectively, to seek to move forward with its implementation. Addressing the outstanding objectives of resolution 1701 (2006) can serve as an important confidence-building measure for the region, and I appeal to the Security Council and to bilateral partners and donors to redouble efforts to encourage both Lebanon and Israel to progress on the implementation of the resolution. Progress on the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions will be central to peace and security in Lebanon, to end conflict in the region and to a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

81. I wish to extend my continued appreciation to all countries contributing troops and equipment to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon of UNTSO. I thank my Special Coordinator, Sigrid Kaag, and the staff of her office for their efforts; as well as the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL. I pay tribute to the outgoing UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Luciano Portolano, who has provided excellent service and leadership for the past two years.